

Tocsin

by [J. Barrie Shepherd](#) in the [March 29, 2017](#) issue

“a warning; an omen . . .”

*(American Heritage Dictionary)*

Here on Maine’s rocky coast we should not be too surprised to hear the occasional shrill melody, a sandpiper, perhaps, or endangered piping plover, sounding the alarm from Higgins Beach just down the shore.

But recent evenings we are being serenaded—late but lusty—by this year’s crop of peeper frogs, piping their insistent, eerie clamor from the reeds that cluster round our catchment pond, there by the dog run.

“Singing for their supper, like as not,” I reassure myself, as their steep voices punctuate my final dog walk of the day; although—more likely—singing for something a tad closer to this fast approaching bed-time, bedding-down-time, clambering-upon-time, time for frogs to do their clinging, slippery, slithery thing that leads to further frogs; a not inconsequential process for this lately threatened species.

“We piped to you . . . you did not dance,” the holy man said long ago, “we wailed . . . you did not weep.”

So are they also wailing over there tonight, and is anyone, apart from my small dog, panicked by their urgent, haunting cries?